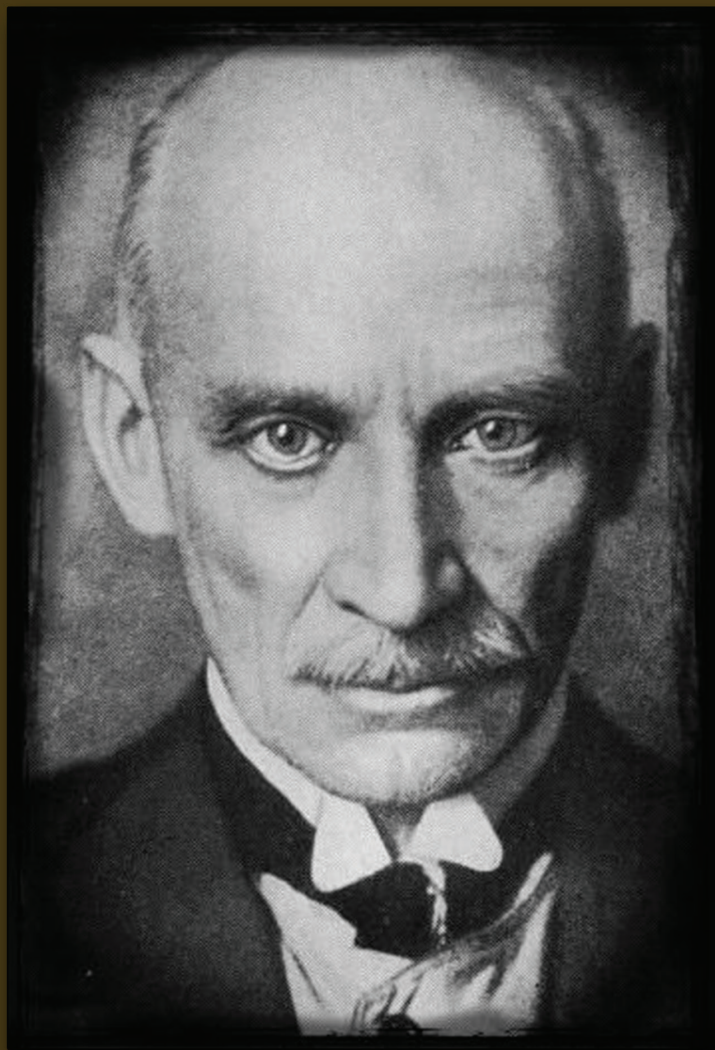


THE PATH OF AWAKENING ACCORDING TO GUSTAV MEYRINK



The Path of Awakening According to Gustav Meyrink

The beginning is what man lacks.

It is not that it is difficult for him to find it. It is precisely the preconceived idea of having to find it that becomes a stumbling block

Life is generous; at every instant it gives us a new beginning. Every second we are confronted by the question: "Who am I?" We do not ask it, and this is why we do not find the beginning.

But if for once we were to take it seriously; a new day would arise, whose dusk would spell death for those thoughts that have infiltrated the royal palace and now sponge at the table of our souls.

The coral reef that these thoughts have diligently created in the course of millennia and which we call "our body" is their work and the place where they dwell and breed. If we really want to reach the open sea, we must first open a breach in this reef of glue and lime, and then redissolve it into the spirit that it originally was.

Those who do not learn to see on this earth will certainly not learn in the “great beyond.”

The key to the power over the lower nature has been rusted since the Flood. It is called, “to be awake.”

To be awake is everything.

There is nothing that man can be more certain of than being awake. The truth is that he is caught in a net of sleep and dream that he himself has woven. The thicker the net, the mightier is his sleep. Those who are caught in it are the sleepers who go through life as cattle to the slaughter, dumb, indifferent, and thoughtless.

To be awake is everything.

The first step in this direction is so easy that any child can take it; only the misled has forgotten how to walk, with both feet paralyzed, because he will not throw away the crutches he has inherited from his ancestors.

Be awake in all that you do! Do not think you are already awake. No: you are asleep and dreaming. Be firm, collect yourself, and briefly behold the sensation that runs through your body: “NOW I AM AWAKE!”

If you can feel this, you will also suddenly re-

alize that, in comparison, the state in which you were a few moments ago is like stupor and sleepiness. This is the first feeble step in a very long journey from slavery to omnipotence. Walk in this fashion from one awakening to the next. There is no pestering thought that you cannot thereby dispel; it is left behind and can no longer reach you. You overshadow it, just as the canopy of a tree outgrows its dried-up limbs.

Once you have reached the point where this awakening also permeates your body, sorrows will fall off you like dead leaves.

The ice-cold ritual baths of the Jews and Brahmins; the vigils of Buddha's disciples and of the Christian ascetics; the torments of Indian fakirs to keep from falling asleep – there are all nothing but external, crystallized rituals, which like broken columns bear witness to the seeker: “Here, very long ago, stood a mysterious temple dedicated to awakening.”

Read the sacred scriptures of every people on earth: through all of them runs the scarlet thread of the secret doctrine of awakening. It is the ladder of Jacob, who wrestled with the Angel of the Lord all “night,” until the “day” broke and he was victorious.

If you want to overcome death itself, whose

armor is sleep, dream, and dullness, you must climb from one step of awakening to the next. Imagine: the lowest step of this heavenly ladder is called “genius.” What name shall we then give to the highest ones? They remain unknown to the multitudes and are considered to be legend.

On your way to awakening, the first enemy that will bar your path is your own body. It will fight against you till cockcrow. However, if you behold the day of eternal awakening that will pluck you from the sleep-walkers who think themselves men and do not know that they are sleeping gods = then even the body’s sleep will vanish and the entire universe be subject to you. Then you will be able to perform miracles at will, without having to wait humbly like a whimpering slave for a cruel God to bestow his grace upon you, or strike your head off.

It is true: you will no longer know the happiness of a faithful and tail-wagging dog that comes from acknowledging a master above itself, whom it must serve. But ask yourself this question: now that you are a man, would you like to trade places with your own dog?

All those who experience the earth as a prison, and every believer who cries for redemption – such people unconsciously evoke the world of ghosts.

Do it too, but be fully aware!

Will those who do it unconsciously find an invisible hand to magically transform into solid ground the marshes into which they stray? I do not want to argue, but I don't believe so.

When on the way of awakening you go through the world of ghosts, you will gradually recognize that they too are nothing but thoughts that you can suddenly see with your eyes. This is the reason that they look alien to you and like beings; for the language of forms is different from the language of the brain.

Then the time has come for the strangest transformation that can ever happen to you: out of the people surrounding you, ghosts emerge. All those who have been dear to you suddenly become larvae, including your own body.

It is the most terrifying solitude that one can imagine. It is like a pilgrimage through the desert: those who do not find the spring of life in it will die of thirst.

This is the sign, or the stigma, of all those who have been bitten by the “Snake of the spiritual

world.” It almost seems as if two lives must be grafted onto us like a slip onto a common tree, before the miracle of awakening can occur. The separation that otherwise occurs in death occurs here through the extinction of memories, or sometimes due to a sudden inner upheaval.

Everybody could attain this if he had the key. The key consists simply in becoming aware of one’s “form of the Self” or of one’s skin, even though one may be asleep, in discovering the narrow crack through which consciousness slips between waking and deep sleep.

The struggle for immortality is a battle for the control over the sounds and fhosts that dwell in us; the waiting for our “Self” to become King is the waiting for the Messiah.

Everything I have said here is also found in the scriptures of every people, namely the advent of a new Kingdom, the awakening, the victory over the body and solitude. And yet a bridgeless abyss separates us from these people: they believe that a day is coming when good people will enter Paradise and evil people will be swallowed into the pit of Hell. We, on the contrary, know that a time will come when many will reawaken and be separated from those who sleep, as lords from slaves, because the sleepers cannot understand

the awakened. We know that there is no good and evil, but only “truth” and “falsehood.” They believe that “being awake” consists in keeping the senses and the eyes open and the body erect during the night to recite prayers. We know that “being awake” corresponds to the awakening of the immortal Self, and that sleeplessness of the body is just its natural consequence. They believe that the body must be neglected and despised due to its sinfulness. We know that sin does not exist, that the body is where we have to start and that we have come down to earth in order to transform it into spirit. They believe that it is necessary to go with one’s own body into solitude in order to purify the spirit. We know that our spirit must first go into solitude in order to transfigure the body. It is up to you and to you alone to choose your path: ours or theirs. Your free will has to make the choice.

I have said that the beginning of the way is our own body. Those who know this can begin the journey at any time.
Now I will teach you the first steps.
You must become detached from your body, but

not as if you wished to abandon it. You must free yourself from it as if trying to separate light from heat.

Hear lurks the first enemy.

Those who separate themselves from their bodies in order to fly through space go the way of the witches, who have turned their gross earthly body into a ghostly one and ride it like a broom to Walpurgis Night.

Witches believe they are at the Devil's Sabbath, while their bodies lie senseless and rigid in their rooms. They merely exchange their earthly perception for a spiritual one; they lose their best part to gain a worse one; theirs is an impoverishment rather than an enrichment.

You can already see that this is not the way to awakening. In order to grasp that you are not your body (as most people believe), you must recognize the weapons that your body uses to maintain its power over you. You are so much at its mercy that your life would end if your heart ceased to beat; also, you plunge into the night as soon as you close your eyes. You believe you can move your body around, but this is an illusion; on the contrary, it is your body that moves itself, merely borrowing your will. You think you can create thoughts. You are mistaken: it is your body

that sends them to you so that you think they came from you, and do its bidding.

Sit up straight and resolve neither to move a limb nor to blink, and to remain as still as a statue, then you will see how your body, filled with hatred, rebels against you, attempting to subjugate you again. It will assail you with a thousand weapons and give you no rest until allow it to move again. By its fierce anger and its excessive struggle, as if flinging darkt after dart at you, if you are sly you will realize how much it fears to lose its control and how great your power must be if it is so afraid of you.

However, to dominate your body should not be the ultimate goal you pursue. When you forbid it to move, you must do it only in order to come to know the forces on which its dominion extends: they are legion, almost infinite in number. Your body will send them to fight against you, one after the other, as long as you continue to resist its urges by merely sitting still. The first weapon will be the brute force of muscles that quiver and throb; seething blood that makes the face swear; hammering of the heart; cold shivers on the skin; swaying of the body; as if your center of gravity had shifted. You will be able to face and defeat

all of these forces, thanks to your will. But it will not be the will alone: there is a higher awakening behind it, invisible like Siegfried's magical helm. This victory too is not meaningless. Even if you were to master your breathing and your heart-beat, you would just be a fakir, which means a "pauper."

The next champions that your body sends against you are elusive swarms of thoughts.

Against them, the sword of the will is powerless.

The wilder you strike at them, the more rapidly they buzz around you; even if you succeeded in momentarily getting rid of them, you would become lethargic and thus be defeated in a different way.

To order them to stay still is a waste of energy.

There is only one way to escape from them: take refuge in a higher degree of awakening.

How to achieve it is something you must learn on your own.

It is a constant and cautious proceeding with feelings, and at the same time an iron resolution.

This is all I can say about it to you. Any advice that anyone gives to you in this painful struggle is poison. There is a cliff here over which non can help you but yourself.

After reaching this state, you are then confronted

by the domain of ghosts, which I have spoken of earlier.

Frightening or splendid apparitions will confront you, making you believe they are beings from another world. In truth, they are only thoughts in visible form over which you do not yet have full control!

Remember: the more solemn they look, the more dangerous they are!

However, when you find the “deeper meaning” hidden in each of these larval beings, you will see with the eye of the spirit not only their living nucleus, but yours as well. Then, everything that has been taken from you will be returned to you a thousand-fold, as it happened to Job: then you will be back where you started, as fools claim sarcastically. They do not know that there is a difference between coming home after a long time in a foreign land and always staying home.

Nobody knows if you will be allowed to share in the prodigious forces once possessed by ancient prophets, or if you are destined to enter eternal peace.

Our path leads to the threshold of maturity. Once you arrive at it, you are also worthy of receiving that gift.

In either case, you will have become a phoenix:

it is up to you to get there by force.

One of those who still have the key of magic has remained behind, on earth, to seek and to rally those who have been called.

Just as he cannot die, the legend about him cannot die either.

Some say he is the Wandering Jew, others call him Elijah; the Gnostics claim he is John the Evangelist. Naturally, everybody has his own ideas about this figure. A being like him, who has transformed his body into spirit, cannot be tied to any rigid form.

The only true immortal being is the awakened man. Stars and gods disappear; he alone endures and can achieve anything he wants. There is no God above him.

It is not without reason that our way has been called a pagan way. That which a religious man believes about God is nothing but a state that he himself could achieve, if he could only believe in himself. But he obtusely sets up obstacles over which he does not dare to jump. He creates an image to worship, instead of transforming him-

self into it.

If you want to pray, pray to your invisible Self:
it is the only God who can answer your prayers.
The other gods hand you stones instead of bread.
When your invisible Self appears in you as an
entity, you will recognize it by the face that it
will cast a shadow. I myself did not know ear-
lier on who I was, until I saw my own body as a
shadow.
